

GOSPEL COMMUNITY GUIDE

Living Faithfully in Exile
Esther 1 | April 12, 2026



REDEEMER
ROUND ROCK

QUICK UPDATES

Share any upcoming church events and handle housekeeping for the Gospel Community.

CONNECT

Where do you see the values around you not lining up with what God calls you to?

REVIEW

Have someone read the passage out loud from the ESV translation or something similar. Reflect on any insights, questions, or parts that stood out from the text or the sermon. Then read the summary below.

This sermon introduces the book of Esther as a story of trusting God when He seems hidden. Set in the Persian Empire under King Ahasuerus, it reveals the “kingdom of man” as marked by power, pride, and pleasure—impressive on the surface but ultimately fragile. Even though God’s name is never mentioned, He is quietly at work behind the scenes, orchestrating events to preserve His people. The sermon highlights the theme of reversal, pointing forward to the ultimate reversal in the gospel through Jesus Christ. Because God is sovereign even when unseen, His people can trust Him and live faithfully in exile.

LEARN & LIVE

These questions help us grasp the truth of the passage and consider how to live it out.

- What stands out to you about how King Ahasuerus uses his power in verses 3–8?
- What details in the text highlight the king’s desire to display his wealth and glory?
- Why do you think the author spends so much time describing the setting and luxury of the kingdom?
- What does the king’s command regarding Queen Vashti reveal about how he views people?
- How does Vashti’s refusal (v.12) change the tone of the story?
- What do the king’s reaction and the advisors’ response reveal about the stability of his kingdom?
- What fears are driving the king’s advisors in verses 16–20?
- How does this chapter show that power in the “kingdom of man” is more fragile than it appears?
- According to the sermon, what are the three defining marks of the “kingdom of man,” and where do you see each one in the text?
- Based on what you see in Esther 1, what makes this kind of kingdom ultimately unreliable to build your life on?

GO DEEPER

These questions invite us to slow down and wrestle with what’s going on beneath the surface. Use these to go a little deeper or in your Huddle Groups.

- Where are you most tempted to build your life on the ‘kingdom’ around you?
- How do you typically respond when something you thought was secure starts to feel fragile?
- Where are you tempted to use power, influence, or position for yourself rather than for others?
- In what situations or areas of your life do you feel the pull to prioritize comfort or pleasure over faithfulness?
- Where do you feel the pressure to “keep up” with the “kingdom” around you?
- How does it affect your faith when God feels hidden or hard to see?
- What would it look like for you to trust God in a situation where you don’t see Him working right now?
- What does it look like to resist the values of the world without withdrawing from it?

- Where do you feel tension between fitting in and honoring God?
- How do you discern when something in your life is shaping you more than you realize?
- **How is the Holy Spirit comforting you or challenging you personally from this discussion? How will you respond and what will you do differently this week? Is there anywhere you need help to make that happen?**

PRAY FOR NEEDS in the GROUP

- Some other ways to pray:
 - Pray about one way God spoke to you tonight through His Word
 - Pray by name for one person you know who is far from God..
- Pray for this ministry area of Redeemer: [Pray for Redeemer Georgetown](#).

5 GROUP DISCUSSION RULES

We want to be full of grace as we meet, deepening our relationship with one another and with Christ. These five values help us know our **P.L.A.C.E.** in our GC's and Huddles.

1. **Pray** - Prayer is a space for confession, struggle, and praise. Keep requests focused on yourself and your immediate family, so we can pray specifically and personally.
2. **Listen** - Be present and attentive. Share with humility, be mindful of time, and remember: silence is okay.
3. **Apply** - Answer honestly. Consider how God's Word speaks into your life, and what it might look like to respond.
4. **Confess** - Confession and repentance are signs of maturity. We meet one another with grace, not shame.
5. **Encourage** - Practical advice is helpful, but truth is better. Speak the gospel into each other's hearts and stories.

COMMENTARY EXCERPT:

Royal Parties and the Removal of Vashti (1:1–22)

1:1–4 Esther's first chapter establishes key aspects of the story, most importantly the time and place where it occurs. The opening indicates that the events to be recounted happened in the third year of the reign of Ahasuerus. Many versions use the Greek form of his name Xerxes, but the same king is meant. What is stressed is the extent of his empire, covering roughly the area currently represented by the south of Pakistan to the north of Sudan. More commonly, the administrative regions within it are called 'satrapies,' of which there were twenty, but here the smaller provinces are mentioned, perhaps because the number 127 stresses its grandeur more. The third year of his reign is 483 BC, a point at which he had crushed opposition and was thus secure. At such a time, one can easily understand him holding a massive feast, and indeed this introduces a key motif in Ahasuerus' characterization, his love of a feast. This feast was an extraordinary gathering that ran for six months and included the whole army, though presumably not all at the same time. It was intended as a massive display of royal glory and power, taking place in Susa, a major royal citadel which was the king's winter residence and administrative center.

1:5–8 With the main feast completed, Ahasuerus immediately hosted a second feast for seven days. This feast was within the palace complex and was for those associated with it. The king's extraordinary wealth is stressed here as we are given a series of impressions of the palace décor, all of which mention various luxury goods. His wealth is also evident in the abundant wine he provided. None of this can be separated from his power, because even the possibility of each person drinking what they wanted apparently required a royal decree! But including this point also introduces another key motif in the book since royal decrees will prove to be a major challenge.

1:9–12 Alongside the king's feast, his queen, Vashti, held another for the women. The term "queen" probably refers in Esther to the principal member of the harem rather than the formal holder of the title. According to Herodotus, Ahasuerus' official wife was called Amestris,³ but their relationship was not good, so Vashti seems to have functioned as queen, even if it was not her formal position. Whatever her status, she is seen here only in her relationship to Ahasuerus. On the feast's seventh day Ahasuerus commanded seven eunuchs to bring her to his feast. The listing of these eunuchs is another typical feature of the book, here stressing the king's power. What mattered was that Vashti's beauty be shown, helped by her crown. Vashti, however, refused to come. We are not told why, but this simple refusal sets in chain a range of events, all of which show that Ahasuerus is less powerful than it had seemed.

1:13–22 A key feature in the book of Esther is that Ahasuerus never decides anything unless someone else advises him what to do, and that is evident here. This advice comes from his seven advisers, all of whom were his close associates and legal experts, though in fact their approach will show neither wisdom nor legal awareness. For Ahasuerus, Vashti's decision must be a legal matter, and his question is phrased accordingly. But Ahasuerus is someone who receives the type of answer he wants, not what he needs. So Memucan, representing the advisers, offers an extended answer which greatly exaggerates the effects of Vashti's act, claiming that her act will lead to every noble wife disrespecting her husband. Of course, these women will only know about her act because of the decree that he proposes, which is that she be removed and replaced with someone "better" than her. Presumably, this intended to mean someone who always does as the king wants, but this will open the way for Esther's arrival at the court. The decree also introduces the motif of the irrevocability of Persian law, something unproblematic here but which later raises a significant challenge for Esther and Mordecai. The Persian court was equipped with a major postal service and it is immediately applied to the decree's distribution.

David Firth, Esther [<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/esther>]